

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An allergen sorbent composition comprising a smectite clay having a cation exchange capacity of at least 75 meq./100 grams of clay, intercalated with an organic surface modifier intercalant molecule that contains at least one moiety selected from the group consisting of aldehyde, ketone, carboxylic acid, alcohol, phenol, ether, catechol, lactam, lactone and pyrrolidone, said intercalant ion-dipole bonded to an exchangeable cation on an inner platelet surface of the clay; said surface-modified clay dispersed in a cosmetically acceptable carrier.
2. The composition of claim 1, wherein the organic surface modifier is ion-dipole adhered bonded to the inner platelet surface of the clay in an amount in the range of about 10% to about 50% by weight, based on the total weight of the surface-modified clay.
3. The composition of claim 1, wherein the organic surface modifier is an alkyl pyrrolidone, wherein the alkyl has at least 6 carbon atoms.
4. The composition of claim 1, wherein the amount of surface modified clay dispersed in the cosmetically acceptable solvent is in the range of 1% to about 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.
5. The composition of claim 1, wherein the amount of surface modified clay dispersed in the cosmetically acceptable solvent is in the range of about 5% to about 15% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

5 7. The composition of claim 1, wherein the smectite clay is
selected from the group consisting of montmorillonite, saponite, hectorite,
beidellite, and admixtures thereof.

8. The composition of claim 1, wherein the smectite clay is a montmorillonite clay.

10 9. The composition of claim 1, wherein the smectite clay is
a synthetic smectite.

10. A method for protecting skin from contact with an allergen comprising topically applying to the skin the composition of claim 1.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the composition
15 comprises 1% to about 30% by weight of the surface modified clay and 99%
to 70% by weight solvent.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the allergen sorbent composition is applied as a salve.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the gel is applied as an
20 aerosol spray.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the composition is applied to a substrate selected from the group consisting of clothing, shoes, and pets to deactivate an allergen sorbed thereon.

5 15. The method of claim 10, wherein the organic surface modifier is contained by the clay in an amount in the range of about 10% to about 50% by weight, based on the total weight of the surface-modified clay, without considering the weight of the cosmetically acceptable solvent.

10 16. The method of claim 10, wherein the organic surface modifier is an n-alkyl pyrrolidone wherein the alkyl is at least 10 carbon atoms in length.

17. The method of claim 10, wherein the amount of surface modified clay dispersed in the cosmetically acceptable solvent is in the range of 1% to about 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

15 18. The method of claim 10, wherein the amount of surface modified clay dispersed in the cosmetically acceptable solvent is in the range of about 5% to about 15% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

20 19. The method of claim 10, wherein the cosmetically acceptable solvent is selected from the group consisting of propylene glycol, ethanol, a volatile silicon fluid, isopropyl palmitate, isopropyl myristate, glycerol, and admixtures thereof.

20. The method of claim 10, wherein the smectite clay is selected from the group consisting of montmorillonite, saponite, hectorite, beidellite, and mixtures thereof.

5 21. The method of claim 10, wherein the smectite clay is a montmorillonite clay.

22. The method of claim 10, wherein the smectite clay is a synthetic smectite.

10 23. A method deactivating an allergen and reducing the severity of an allergic reaction caused by contact of the allergen with human skin comprising applying the composition of claim 1 to the skin of an individual after exposure to said allergen.

15 24. A method deactivating an allergen and reducing the severity of an allergic reaction caused by contact of the allergen with human skin comprising applying the composition of claim 1 to the clothes of an individual after exposure to said allergen.

20 25. A urushiol sorbent comprising a smectite type clay having a cation exchange capacity of at least 75 meq./100 grams of clay, intercalated with an organic surface modifier intercalant molecule that contains at least one moiety selected from the group consisting of aldehyde, ketone, carboxylic acid, alcohol, phenol, ether, catechol, lactam, lactone and pyrrolidone, said intercalant being ion-dipole bonded to an exchangeable cation on a platelet surface of the clay.